

Sullivan's Gym

by Dragoness

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Summary: This is a dark fic, in fact, it's probably the darkest one I've ever written other than One. I'm not sure about the rating or the genre, so I'm playing on the safe side...

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"Excuse me. Is your name Ash Ketchum?"

Ash turned to examine the stranger. He looked like he was in his forties and had thinning gray hair. He was tall though, and stared down at Ash over a pointed nose and through sharp, brown eyes. He was dressed sensibly, if not casually.

"Yeah  |That's me," said Ash, "Why?"

"I challenge you to a Pok  mon battle," said the man, "My name is Sullivan. If you accept my challenge, would you please follow me to my gym?"

"You have a gym!?" Ash asked excitedly. "All right! Do I get a badge?"

The man shook his head. "I don't have a badge. I don't need one." He looked up. "I have never been defeated in battle."

"Ha! There's a first time for everything!"

"Hey, Ash!" Misty said, "Remember A.J.?"

Ash paused to reflect on his pathetic attempt to win against A.J., who had won 98 battles in a row at that time, and his water-proof Sandshrew. Pikachu hadn't even entered the ring before he'd lost.

"Uh-eh-heh!" Ash pushed those thoughts away. "That's all in the past. Now my Pok mon are stronger than ever! We can handle anything!"

"Except Richie," Brock added.

Ash glared at him. "I know I would've won if my Pok mon hadn't been so tired out from Team Rocket."

"So do you accept my challenge or not?" Sullivan interrupted.

"I accept!" Ash said.

Sullivan smiled faintly. "Very well then. Follow me."

He led them along the dirt path through a forest trail, until they came to a large building hidden deep within the woods.

"Wow," Ash commented, " Nice place you got here."

He didn't really mean that. The whole area seemed to give off an ominous feeling. It was placed underneath layers of shadows, and the eerie quietness was overwhelmingly loud. Even the wind seemed restrained.

Sullivan smiled at Ash. "You like it, do you? It's my home."

Ash gulped and faked an enthused grin.

Pikachu whispered into his ear. It said something about turning back before it was too late.

"No," Ash whispered back, "We came here, and now we gotta have our match."

Pikachu lowered its ears, disappointed. "Chu " it whimpered.

Sullivan pushed open one of the huge double-doors. It creaked and groaned loudly, scaring Pikachu enough to hide inside of Ash's backpack.

Sullivan chuckled at that.

"Your Pikachu sure does scare easily, doesn't it?" He laughed. "It's no big deal. Only squeaky hinges."

Ash laughed nervously. Sullivan was wrong. It took a lot more than "squeaky hinges" to scare Pikachu.

Sullivan stood holding the door open. "Well? What are you waiting for? Go inside!"

He smiled, but his smile just made Ash all the more nervous. Ash nodded quickly and stepped into the dark, dreary building. Misty and Brock filed in after him. He could tell that they were as nervous as he was.

Sullivan came in last, carefully shutting the door behind them. It

creaked a lot more, then closed with a loud, resonating thud.

They were suddenly immersed in pure blackness.

Misty yelped. "Hey! It's pitch black in here! Someone turn on a light!"

There was a click, and several lights from above revealed an old-fashioned, high-ceilinged room, with a dusty red carpet leading up twin staircases to another tier. Underneath the balcony was a relatively small pair of double-doors that were draped in shadow. On either side of the balcony were more doors, which were painted white, though the paint was discolored and peeling.

"Yep," Brock said, "Ash was right. This is a really nice place ya got here."

Sullivan either didn't notice his ironic tone of voice, or chose to ignore it.

"Glad you like it," he said, stepping forward. He stopped and turned his head towards them. "Would spectators please take the upper left hand door? And would the challenger please enter the door straight ahead? I'll meet you in the gym."

With that, Sullivan strode up the right hand staircase and went through the door, closing it behind him.

Misty, Brock and Ash glanced at each other and shrugged.

"I guess we'll be seeing you then," said Misty, "Good luck."

"Yeah. Don't mess this one up," said Brock.

"Gee, thanks," Ash said sarcastically, "I'm glad you have faith in me, Brock."

"Yeah, well. You know."

"Let's go," said Misty.

Misty and Brock did as Sullivan had instructed them to, and soon, Ash was alone with Pikachu.

Due to the sudden silence, Pikachu poked its head out of the bag.

"Pi ka?" it asked quietly, "Chu?"

Ash took off his backpack and held it in front of him so he could see Pikachu.

"What are you worried about?" he asked, "We're gonna win this one. Right?"

Pikachu shook its head vigorously. "Chu! Chuchu!" It stopped and looked at Ash with pleading eyes. "Pikachu?"

"No, I will not give up!" he said stubbornly, "We haven't even started yet! What if this guy is just all talk? We can't know for

sure if he's undefeated or not. We don't even know how many battles he's fought!"

"Piiâ€|"

"Don't worry, Pikachu. We can handle anything he throws our way. You can count on that."

Pikachu sighed.

"Come on. They're all waiting on us."

Ash put his backpack back on his back and shakily opened the dimly lit doors Sullivan had told him to. He peeked through the crack and was surprised to see a large, comparatively brightly lit stadium, complete with rows and rows of seats for spectators. The lines on the floor were the exact same as for an official match, and there was even protective glass around the ring for the audience.

Ash quietly stepped inside. He was still under a low roof, which had more seats piled on top of it. Ash wondered why there was so much room for an audience if it didn't seem like anyone ever went there.

He walked out onto the field. It was huge. The double doors at the opposite end were so tiny they could have been dollhouse size. Ash scanned the audience seating, and soon found Misty, Brock, and Togepi seated to his left, near the front row. When they saw him looking at them, they waved, and Ash stiffly waved back. He tried grinning to reassure them, but he wasn't very comfortable himself.

"Pi, kaâ€|"

Pikachu jumped out of his backpack and landed by his feet. It looked up at Ash.

"Pikachu?"

Ash looked down.

"Yep. Looks like we're really gonna battle."

"Pikachu?"

Ash cracked a smile. "I sure do hope so, Pikachu."

A few moments later, the doors at the other end swung open loudly and Sullivan stepped through them. The doors closed quickly behind him.

"Are you ready, Ash Ketchum!?" Sullivan asked, having to shout to be heard.

"You bet!" Ash yelled back, with his normal bravado.

"Then let's begin! We will have a six-on-six battle! No time limit! Begin!"

"Six-on-six?" Ash asked in surprise. He'd never been in a gym battle with that rule before.

\_I'd better be carefulâ€¦I'll save my best PokÃ©mon for lastâ€¦That means I should probably start out withâ€¦â€¦\_

--

"Charizard! I choose you!"

He threw out his first PokÃ©ball, and Charizard appeared at his end of the ring.

"Ha!" laughed Sullivan, "Charizard? I saw you battle Richie on TV, kid. This Charizard won't listen to you! My PokÃ©mon should be more than a match! Onix! Go get 'em!"

Sullivan's first PokÃ©mon was huge. The largest of them all, to be precise. Measuring just under 30 feet in length, Onix made the immense gym look small.

"Charizard!" Ash commanded, "You have to listen to me! That Onix is going to be tough! You can't win if you don't fight! Okay?"

Charizard didn't listen.

"Please, Charizard! You have to! Use your Fire Spin attack!"

Charizard yawned.

"Onix!" said Sullivan, "Bind attack! Crush that morsel!"

"Charizard!! \_Please!!\_ You \_have\_ to! I'm \_begging\_ you!!"

Charizard opened one eye and saw the giant rock snake circling quickly around it. Concerned more for its own safety than the match, it flew up in an attempt to evade Onix's attack.

Onix wasn't as dumb as it looked, though. It raised its head and slammed it against Charizard, driving it to the ground. It then proceeded to coil its thick, rock-hard body around and around, burying Charizard in a chain of boulders.

"Charizard!!" Ash cried.

Onix coiled tighter and tighter. Charizard's roars of pain were muffled into minute echoes of its true voice. Finally, even those were stamped out.

"Good job, Onix," Sullivan said, "Let's see what's left of it."

Onix carefully uncoiled itself, eventually revealing a broken Charizard, lying motionless on the ground. Its wings were crumpled over its still body. Its eyes were closed tight, but most importantly, was the candle-size flame, still flickering away at the tip of its tail.

"\_Charizard!!\_" yelled Ash. He couldn't believe that Charizard had

lost so quickly and so easily. Maybe Pikachu was right. Maybe he \_was\_ in over his head.

"Hmâ€|Still aliveâ€|" Sullivan murmured. "Onix! Finish it! Tackle attack!!"

Onix arched up, then dove down, aiming for Charizard's last dying light.

"\_NO!\_" screamed Ash, "\_Charizard! Return! Now!!\_"

Onix slammed into the ground just as Charizard became a beam of red light and reentered Ash's PokÃ©ball.

"What was that for!?" asked Sullivan, "We weren't finished yet!"

"No way! You can't kill my PokÃ©mon."

"â€|You just wait and see."

Ash stared in disbelief. Was this guy really serious? Why would he want to \_kill\_ his PokÃ©mon? The whole point of trainer battles was to test out their strength and see who was the better trainer. They didn't need to \_kill\_.

"â€|â€|I forfeit."

He looked down at Pikachu, who looked back up at him.

"Let's go."

"Pika," Pikachu nodded.

Ash turned to leave. He tugged on the door handle, but it didn't budge.

"What theâ€|?"

"Sorry, kid," Sullivan called, "but we're playing this match to the end. Winner takes all."

Ash whirled around. "What on earth are you talking about?! What is there to take?"

"Everything." Sullivan smiled grimly. "Send out your next PokÃ©mon."

\_I can't do thatâ€|This guy's insaneâ€|\_

"Pikaâ€|Pika pikaâ€|" Pikachu said, full of worry.

Ash smiled at his friend's concern.

\_Don't worry, Pikachu. We WILL win this one. I promise.\_

Ash looked at the huge Onix again.

\_If I know a PokÃ©mon that can handle Onix, it's gotta beâ€|\_

--

"Squirtle! I choose you!"

"Squirtle! Squirt!"

Sullivan held out a Pok  ball.

"Onix, return."

"\_What\_!?"

"Don't worry," Sullivan said, "I've got another Pok  mon." He pulled out another Pok  ball. "Go! Victreebel!"

Ash stared at Sullivan's huge Victreebel. It had to be at least six feet high.

\_How is Squirtle supposed to beat that thing  ?\_

--

"Squirtle! We're gonna play this defensively! Withdraw! Now!"

"Squirtle!"

Squirtle ducked into its shell.

"Victreebel, Razor Leaf!"

Ash could only watch helplessly as Victreebel let loose dozens and dozens of giant, vicious, cutting leaves.

"Squirtle! \_Look out!!\_" he cried in horror.

Squirtle peeked cautiously out of its shell just in time to see the leaves race through it. They flew into Squirtle, actually cutting through its shell and leaving it defenseless. When they finally stopped flying, Squirtle remained still, its head and legs hanging limply from what used to be its shell.

"No      " Ash whispered.

\_Squirtle can't die  This can't be real  \_

--

"Squirtle, return!!" Ash called, praying that it would work.

Amazingly, the red beam of light engulfed Squirtle, and it returned to its Pok  ball.

"Impossible!" Sullivan said, "That Squirtle had to be dead!"

Ash stared down at the Pok  ball he held in his hand, tears were threatening to fall from his eyes  He had nearly lost two of his best friends. He would not make that mistake again  

"Sullivan! This is the last time I'm going to tell you! I

\_forfeit\_"

Sullivan stepped forward and spread his arms in a questioning gesture.

"I can't let you leave until this battle ends. Don't you understand that, Ash?" he asked.

"I'm not going to fight you!" Ash said angrily, "I don't want you to kill my Pok  mon!"

"You call yourself a Pok  mon trainer?" Sullivan asked, "What use is it to train Pok  mon if they're not willing to risk their lives for you? What use are they if they are not strong enough to not have to worry about that? My Pok  mon are so loyal, they would lay their life down at any time for me, but I have made them strong  |Strong enough to kill, and \_that\_ is what Pok  mon are for."

Ash couldn't believe what he was hearing. This guy was insane! Is that what he really thought?

"That's not what Pok  mon are for  |  |That's not what trainers are supposed to do! Pok  mon are our friends! I train my Pok  mon so that we can both become stronger, and so that we can become even closer friends  |I know my Pok  mon care about me, because they know that I care about them  |  |They're my friends, and I don't want to see them get killed  |  |"

"Pikachu."

"We'll see," Sullivan said.

He took out five Pok  balls.

"Go!"

Ash stepped back. Victreebel, Onix, Cloyster, Magmar, Fearow, and Gengar.

"  |What are you doing!?" he asked.

"Let's see just how much your Pok  mon care about you  |  |" Sullivan pointed at Ash. "Attack!"

Ash screamed in fear, and backed up as far as he could. When he hit the wall, he ducked into the corner.

"Pikachu!!!" Pikachu cried.

"Pikachu! Get out of the way!" Ash shouted.

"Piika!" Pikachu shook its head, "\_CHUUUU!!!!!"

Pikachu successfully shocked every single one of Sullivan's Pok  mon, but it hardly seemed to phase them. Even Fearow and Cloyster were fine.

"  |This is it  |" Ash whispered, "This is how it's all gonna end  |  |"



"ashâ€¦!" came a muffled cry from behind the doors.

"Misty!?" he shouted back.

"Ash! Are you alright!?"

"Misty! We have to get out of here! He's trying to kill us!"

"We're doing the best we can, but the door's stuck!"

"Chhaaa!"

Ash snapped his head toward the battle to see Pikachu fly backwards and skid to a stop just before hitting the door. It was weakened, but breathing. Pikachu wouldn't give up until the endâ€¦but that was what Ash was afraid ofâ€¦

"Hurry up!" he called to Misty and Brock, "Try to get Onix to ram the door or something! Just get us outta here! AAAHH!"

A Fire Blast from Magmar hit him, and he clung to himself and fell to the groundâ€¦His clothes were on fire, but he couldn't notice. He found himself staring into Pikachu's eyes, and at that moment, they both knew that whatever happened to them, they would suffer through it togetherâ€¦

Ash tried rolling to put out the fire, but he only had about a square yard to roll around in. Any farther, and he'd get hurt even more.

He heard a loud thumping against the door, but the door was holding fast. They wouldn't make it in timeâ€¦

"This is itâ€¦Pikachuâ€¦" he whispered.

"Pikaâ€¦chuâ€¦" Pikachu responded, "Pikapikaâ€¦"

Ash felt an Ice Beam hit him, but he was relieved to know that the fire had been put out. He didn't notice the shards of frozen crystal that had formed in its placeâ€¦

Pikachu watched as its master, and more importantly, its best friend, began to slip away before its eyesâ€¦Pikachu could not let this go on. It faced its opponents with a vengeance.

They attacked it left and right. Pikachu dodged back and forth, using the Agility skill that it had mastered so wellâ€¦Not all the attacks missed, but Pikachu did not stop. It knew there was only one way to win this warâ€¦

At the last possible second, it dashed through the line the other PokÃ©mon had formed and found itself face to face with Sullivan himself. Never before had Pikachu felt the hatred that it felt then. Its eyes darkened, and its face was grim.

"Pikaâ€¦" it said darkly.

Sparks flew from its cheeks. Without moving an inch, Pikachu unleashed its full fury onto the man known as Sullivan. The crack of thunder could be heard a mile away, and the light from its attack lit up the entire gym and reached farther than the eye could

seeâ€|

â€|Sullivan had no electric PokÃ©mon. He had never felt the power of one before. He had never seen such a bond between human and PokÃ©mon before. He had never had a PokÃ©mon attack him in a full rage, with all of its love and hate powering itâ€|He had never met Pikachu before.

The sparks hung over the gym long after the attack had ended. All sources of electricity had gone out, leaving the building drenched in darkness. The only light came from the electricity still lingering in Pikachu's cheeks, and the flame still burning on Magmar's tail.

Pikachu did not take its eyes off of Sullivan's still form. Pikachu did not know if he was alive or deadâ€|It didn't care.

"â€|pikachuâ€|"

Pikachu turned around. Ash was still lying on the ground, unmoving, but alive. He smiled weakly at his friend.

"â€|weâ€|wonâ€|" he said.

"Pikachuâ€|"

Pikachu ran to his side, and rubbed against him.

"â€|you didâ€|a good jobâ€|" Ash told it.

"Piikaaâ€|"

There was a crash in the gym. Another Onix had broken through the protective glass around the arena and proceeded to crawl onto the floor.

"Ash! Pikachu!"

"Are you guys okay!?"

Sullivan's PokÃ©mon moved to the side as Misty and Brock ran to check on their friends.

"Ash!" Misty cried, "Are you alright?"

"â€|i'll be okayâ€|" Ash replied.

Misty put her hand on his backâ€|He was so coldâ€|She tried to help him up, but he collapsed onto her shoulder. As she held him, she felt slick, cold spots on him where the ice had formed thickly.

"You're so coldâ€|" she whispered.

"i'll be fine," he reassured her.

Magmar, Onix, Victreebel, Fearow, Gengar, and Cloyster began to talk among themselves over their master's body.

"Are you alrightâ€|?" Brock said to Sullivan, not as much out of

concern than out of amazement.

"i amâ€|â€|aliveâ€|" he hacked.

He lifted himself up ever so slightly. He turned his head so that he could see Ash.

"â€|why did you do it?" Ash asked.

"whyâ€|? i did it because that is the real way to fight with PokÃ©monâ€|to bring out a pokÃ©mon's full potential, you must make it killâ€|"

"that's why you tried to kill me?"

"yesâ€|you see, up until now, my pokÃ©mon and i have gone undefeated. once the killing began, most trainers either gave out or tried to fight even harderâ€|some tried to kill us in returnâ€|but youâ€|you did neitherâ€|"

"i tried to forfeitâ€|"

"yes, but you didn't give upâ€|and you didn't try to kill usâ€|â€|because of that, you are the first person to ever defeat meâ€|â€|congratulations ashâ€|your prize nowâ€|i reward you with this gymâ€|â€|don't let this method of training be forgottenâ€|â€|goodbyeâ€|"

His eyes closed, and he laid his head down for the final time.

A long, silence followedâ€|Ash closed his eyes.

"he wants me to lead this gymâ€|" he whispered to Misty, "but i can't do thatâ€|"

\* \* \*

Ash, Misty, Brock, Pikachu and Togepi watched in silence as Sullivan's gym burned to the ground. Sullivan had been left inside. His PokÃ©mon had refused to leave his side, so they burned tooâ€|knowing that they would die.

Nothing was said as the last wisps of smoke trailed into the skyâ€|Misty looked at Ash. His face was grim. She had never seen him like this before. She was worried about himâ€|Pikachu still rode on his shoulder, and it too looked differentâ€|

Without a word, Ash turned around and walked away. Misty and Brock followed behind him.

End  
file.